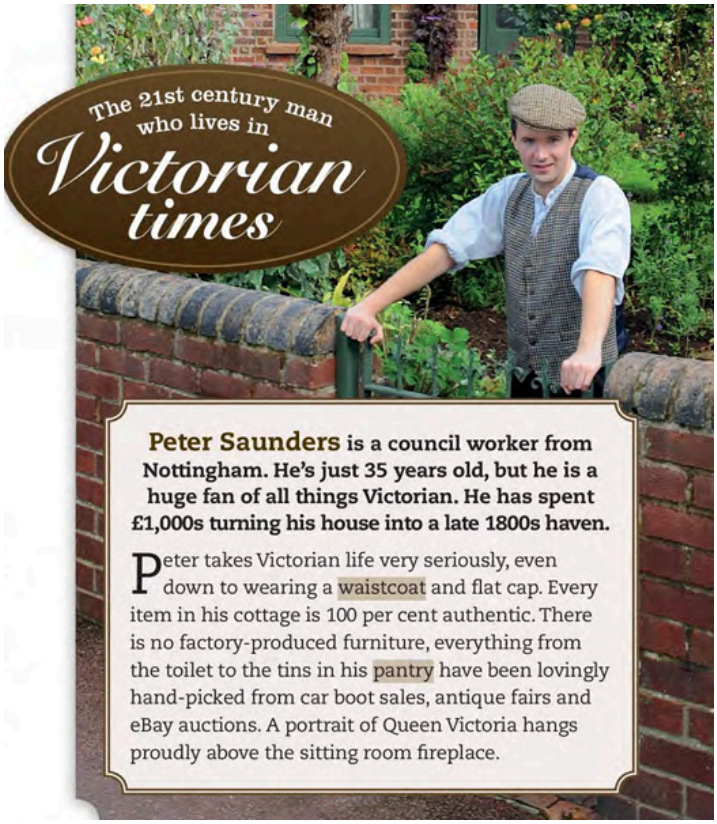

The 21st century man who lives in Victorian times

Peter Saunders is a council worker from Nottingham. He's just 35 years old, but he is a huge fan of all things Victorian. He has spent £1,000s turning his house into a late 1800s haven.

Peter takes Victorian life very seriously, even down to wearing a waistcoat and flat cap. Every item in his cottage is 100 per cent authentic. There is no factory-produced furniture, everything from the toilet to the tins in his pantry have been lovingly hand-picked from car boot sales, antique fairs and eBay auctions. A portrait of Queen Victoria hangs proudly above the sitting room fireplace.

Peter's four-bedroom house now looks much like it used to look when a real-life Victorian family lived there and Peter is considering opening its doors to the public.

He says: 'I've gone to a lot of trouble and I would like to share it with people who will appreciate it. The Victorian period was a fascinating time. Both my mum and my sister are interested in it, too, so I guess my passion for it started from them. My mum is always picking things up for me from car boot sales. I like the idea of the lifestyle that the Victorians had. They would entertain themselves. They used to love a sing-song round the piano. And they were less wasteful than we are today. Things were built to last. I can't stand all that modern stuff made of plastic that all looks the same. Most of my friends are very supportive and they love coming round for dinner parties when all the old glasses and cutlery comes out.'

Peter uses all the original cooking features in his kitchen, but admits to having a microwave oven. He also has a television, central heating and a fridge freezer, but he says: 'All my mod cons are cleverly hidden around the house in cupboards or behind curtains. And I have running water, as most Victorians had, but they didn't have hot water like I do.'

The house has an outside loo, which Peter is restoring. 'But I also have a Victorian-style indoor bathroom with antique fittings, so I suppose I have the best of both worlds – all the modern conveniences but with the romantic and quaint feel of the Victorian period, and it's very cosy – the Victorians were all about comfort.'

Experts agree with Peter that the house genuinely reflects Victorian times. Hilary Silvester, chairman of Nottingham Civic Society, said: 'Peter's done it extremely well. It's not twee in any way and has been restored in such a genuine fashion.'

The 21st century woman who lives in the 1950s

Joanne Massey, 40, lives in a re-creation of a 1950s home in Stafford with her husband Kevin, 47, who is a graphic designer.

Joanne is a housewife. She says:

'I love nothing better than fastening my pinny round my waist and baking a cake for Kevin in my 1950s kitchen. I put on some lovely Frank Sinatra music and am completely lost in my own little fantasy world. In our marriage, I am very much a lady and Kevin is the breadwinner. We've been married for 13 years and we're extremely happy because we both know our roles. I make sure our home is immaculate, there is dinner on the table, and I look pretty to welcome my husband home.'

Joanne doesn't even put petrol in their Ford Anglia car, which is 43 years old, because she thinks that is unladylike. She asks Kevin to do it. She only ever wears 1950s clothing, such as tight pencil skirts, a white blouse and a wide belt. Her furniture is all from the 50s. The kitchen is an original 'English Rose' design, which used to be very much the 'in thing'. They advertised for it in an antiques magazine and bought it from a family in Scotland who had it in their garage to keep tools in.

Joanne thinks modern life is too hectic. Shopping in supermarkets is an ordeal, and she doesn't read newspapers – they are just too distressing. She says: 'We do have a television set, but we hide it in a retro cabinet. Neither of us drinks and our social life revolves around visiting like-minded friends for tea and cakes.'

Her obsession began as a teenager. She loved old movies because they seemed to represent a halcyon time, when women were more feminine and men more protective. She could have gone to university, but chose to work in a bank.

She says: 'I was marking time until I met the right man. Kevin and I met at a Fifties Convention, and we had an old-fashioned courtship before he proposed. I was ecstatic, because I had found someone with the same passion. Some women I meet ask me if I feel patronized by spending all my time caring for Kevin, but I never would.'

At work, Kevin gets teased because he's the only one with home-made cakes and even home-made jam in his sandwiches. Joanne thinks his colleagues are jealous that he has a wife who devotes herself solely to his happiness. How many men these days can really say that?